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Fear of Torture

17 October 1990

EAST TIMOR/INDONESIA Aleixo Laga (also reported as Aleixo Gama), aged 22

Vicente Amaral Moniz, aged 19

Francisco Leal

Eusebio (second name not known)

Agostinho Pereira, aged 21

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Aleixo Laga, an East Timorese student, who was reportedly tortured after his arrest by Indonesian police on 11 September 1990. There is also concern for the fate of the four other students named above who, like Aleixo Laga, were arrested in September this year after a pro-independence demonstration in Dili, East Timor on 4 September. In view of the reported torture of Aleixo Laga and of the consistent and recurrent pattern of torture and ill-treatment of political detainees in East Timor, Amnesty International has reason to believe that these four and possibly others may also have been subjected to such treatment.

According to reports, the pro-independence demonstration took place during the celebration of a Catholic Mass in Lecidere in Dili. Although no arrests were made at the time of the demonstration, dozens of young people were reportedly detained in subsequent days and weeks. Aleixo Laga (or Gama) and Francisco Leal, both students at the day school Externato San Jose, and two other high school students, Vicente Amaral Moniz and another identified only as Eusebio, were reportedly arrested on 9 or 10 September and taken to a police station near the old city market building in Dili where they were reportedly tortured.

Eyewitnesses who saw Aleixo Laga (Gama) in detention in September say he bore signs of torture. He had reportedly been immersed in a tank of water. His face was swollen and had cuts and bruises and he was extremely weak from lack of food. It is believed that was still in detention in mid-October.

Agostinho Pereira, a 21-year-old student at Externato San Jose, was reportedly arrested by Indonesian police on 20 September at a kiosk at Matadouro, Fato Meta, in Dili, where East Timorese youths often meet. He was reportedly beaten by police at the time of his arrest and then taken away to an unknown place. His whereabouts were unknown several days later.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The torture and ill-treatment of alleged political opponents held in military and police detention centres has been a consistent feature of Indonesian rule in East Timor since 1975 when Indonesian forces invaded the territory after the Portuguese withdrawal from its former colony. Over the past two years Amnesty International has documented a pattern of short-term detention, ill-treatment and torture of real and suspected political opponents of Indonesian rule in East Timor. Many of those detained over the past year have been young people and students detained for their alleged participation in a series of apparently peaceful demonstrations in support of East Timor's independence, which began in October 1989 during the visit of Pope John Paul II. The forms of torture reported include submersion in tanks of foetid water, electrical shocks, beatings and death threats.

In addition to the recent arrests and reports of torture, Amnesty International has received information about increasing political violence in East Timor, including reports of apparent extrajudicial executions which have yet to be confirmed. According to one such report, Domingos Mau Radl, aged 30, of Santa Cruz, Dili, was stabbed to death by several plainclothes policemen near the Chinese School in Dili at about 7:30 pm on 10 September.

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